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SERMON BY THE RIGHT REV. JOHN CROES, D. D.

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THE SOLEMN CHARGE OF ST. PAUL TO THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS, ILLUSTRATED.

A Sermon

Preached in St. James' Church, at Philadelphia, before the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States:

BY THE RIGHT REV. JOHN CROES, D. D.,

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY.*

Acts xx. 28.—"*Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock' over the which the* HOLY GHOST *hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of* GOD, *which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

THIS injunction is a part of that solemn and affecting charge, which the Apostle Paul, in his episcopal capacity, gave to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, a city of Asia Minor. The charge itself was delivered at Miletus, to which city, the apostle had summoned the elders, when on his way from Macedonia to Jerusalem. The introductory part of it was admirably calculated to conciliate their regard; and prepare their minds for a ready reception of the injunction that followed. It consists of an appeal to them, in proof of the trials, privations, and dangers, which he underwent; and the disinterestedness, self-denial, zeal, diligence, and fidelity, which he manifested, in preaching and inculcating the great doctrines of *repentance toward* GOD, *and faith toward the* LORD JESUS CHRIST: also of his determination to persevere in the same course; and his willingness to suffer all the imprisonment, and other afflictions, which, through the mo-

*This Right Reverend Prelate was consecrated in St. Peter's Church, in the city of Philadelphia, on Sunday, November 19, 1815, by the Right Reverend Bishop WHITE, of Pennsylvania: the Right Reverend Bishop HOBART, of New York, and the Right Reverend Bishop KEMP, of Maryland, being present and assisting.

nitions of the HOLY SPIRIT, he foresaw, continually awaited him in every city. *None of these things*, said this faithful, this devoted servant of GOD, *move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the* LORD JESUS CHRIST, *to testify the Gospel of the grace of* GOD.

Having thus prepared the hearts of his auditors, he introduced the text, which strictly speaking, is itself the charge; for whatever, of that nature, occurs in the succeeding part of the chapter, may all be comprised in this comprehensive verse. *Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the* HOLY GHOST *hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of* GOD, *which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

The charge may be considered as consisting of three parts, careful attention to themselves; the same attention to the flock over which they had been placed; and the high obligations to such care, arising both from the divine nature of the Being, by whom they had thus been constituted overseers of that flock; and the immense value of the price which had been given for it, the blood of the Son of GOD.

These subjects will be discussed, in the order in which they stand.

In the exhortatory phrase, *Take heed to yourselves*, which is first to be considered, the apostle evidently intended to urge upon the elders addressed, the exercise of the greatest attention and care both with respect to the reality, the correctness, and the purity of their religious principles and affections; and also with respect to the propriety of their conduct in their intercourse with the world.

The first of these is indispensable, as well to private Christians, as to those who hold the sacred and highly responsible office of *ministers of* CHRIST, *and stewards of the mysteries of* GOD.*

Without such vigilance and care, with respect to their thoughts and feelings; without, indeed, daily application *to the throne of grace*,† for divine help to enable them to hold *the truth, as it is in* JESUS;‡ and to enjoy those affections, and possess those graces,

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* 1 Cor. iv. 1. † Heb. iv. 16. ‡ Eph. iv. 2.

which are *the fruits of the Spirit*; neither the minister of the Gospel, nor the private Christian, can long preserve his adoption, as a son of GOD. The consequence to both, as it respects their eternal state, will be the forfeiture of their salvation. But to the former there must be superadded, not only the guilt of violating his ordination vows, but also the inability thus produced, of regulating his life by the precepts of CHRIST; and consequently of rendering his ministry efficient and successful. No man, especially a clergyman, who is uninfluenced by religious principles, by a living faith, and is destitute of those holy affections, which, under divine grace, such principles are calculated to excite and cherish; however well he may, for a time, put on the semblance of a pious and virtuous life, can long continue to exercise that care and vigilance, relative to his conduct, which are necessary to conceal from the world the unsoundness of his pretensions, and his frequent deviations from the purity of the Christian precepts. The consequences of this—in the case of a clergyman—on the religious and moral condition of his flock, cannot fail to be highly injurious.

But, though the absence of a lively sense of religion, in the heart, will, sooner or later, inevitably be accompanied with a defective regard to religious and moral duties; the conclusion must not be drawn, that internal piety, unattended with care and watchfulness as to our conduct in life, will necessarily render that conduct, in all respects, conformable to the divine will. If such were the fact, the directions and injunctions to the practice of moral duties, in cases which presuppose the existence of a genuine faith, and a heart renovated by the HOLY SPIRIT, would have been entirely unnecessary. As it regards the ministry, where would have been the necessity of our Lord's direction to his disciples; *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works.** Where the necessity of St. Paul's exhortations to Timothy, *Thou, O man of* GOD, *flee these things*,—viz. envy, strife, covetousness, &c.—*and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*† *Flee youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace.*‡ We must therefore believe, that the apostle, in

* Matt. v. 16. † 1 Tim. vi. 11. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 22.

the injunction, *Take heed to yourselves*, intended that the elders or presbyters of the Church at Ephesus, should pay a due regard as well to the piety, purity, and benevolence of their conduct, as of their hearts.

In what purity and uprightness of life, as applicable to all the orders of the ministry, chiefly consist, the apostle has stated, in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. They should, said he, *be blameless, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, not to wine, no strikers, not covetous, or greedy of filthy lucre, not brawlers, not selfwilled, not soon angry*, but *just, holy, temperate, gentle and patient;* judicious *rulers of their own houses*, persons, who sustain good characters, especially among those, *who are without*,* or do not belong to *the household of faith*,† and who, *in all things, shew themselves patterns of good works*.‡

But something more was implied, in this injunction, than the care and cultivation of religion in their own hearts and lives. As ambassadors of their Lord and Master to his rebellious creatures; as instructers to those, who manifested a disposition to return to their allegiance and duty, or had already accepted of the offers of pardon and grace; and as governors of that body, composed of these penitent and reconciled offenders, which is, by way of eminence, termed the Church; no doubt can exist, that knowledge of the doctrines and precepts of the religion of which they were ministers, aptness to teach, and wisdom to govern, were qualities also required in them, as well by reason as Scripture.

As to care, in the acquisition of the knowledge of divine truths, and of the learning ordinarily requisite for that purpose; although, from the circumstance that the miraculous gift of tongues, and other extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit, still continued in the Church, it might be supposed not to come within the scope of the injunction to those primitive elders, To *take heed to themselves;* yet if we refer to the cases, in which the apostles urge the acquisition of them, upon those whom they constituted their fellow laborers, and successors in the ministry; it can hardly be doubted, that such was the case. Beside; though it is true, that

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* See 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i. † Gal. vi. 10. ‡ Tit. ii. 8.

many doctrines, relating to the mysteries of redemption, which the apostles were not capable of bearing till after the resurrection and ascension of our Savior, were, according to his promise, communicated to them by the HOLY SPIRIT; yet it does not appear that this privilege was conferred upon others. That such was not the case—indeed, on the contrary, that other ministers were to obtain their knowledge of the Christian doctrines through the medium of the apostles, will plainly appear, by a reference to the passages, above mentioned, in which the duty and the manner of acquiring it, are inculcated and taught. *The things*, said St. Paul to Timothy, *that thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.** *Give attendance to reading, to doctrine*, said he to the same beloved youth, *meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and to the doctrine; continue in them.*†

A competent knowledge of the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion, is indeed indispensable to those, whose office it is to promulgate and explain them; and, with whatever facility this knowledge was originally obtained, it now requires considerable learning and laborious study, to become so well acquainted with them, as to qualify men for that sacred and responsible station.

But to knowledge must be added *aptness to teach*,‡ as it is termed by St. Paul. This is a quality also, in a considerable degree, necessary to a steward of the mysteries of GOD. It has generally its origin in nature; but it must be much cultivated, by study, by the acquisition of literature, and especially, by prayer for the divine blessing upon the exercise of it; before the possessor can be *approved unto* GOD, *a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;*§ *and be able also, by sound doctrine, to convince the gainsayers.*‖

Wisdom in the government of the Church, is another property requisite in the ministerial character. *To be wise as serpents*, at the same time, *as harmless as doves*,¶ was the instruction, which our blessed Lord gave to his disciples, when he first sent

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* 2 Tim. ii. 2. † 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15, 16. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 2.
§ 2 Tim. ii. 15. ‖ Tit. i. 9. ¶ Mat. x. 16.

them out to proclaim, that *the kingdom of Heaven was at hand:** and although this was given with a view to another subject, the avoidance or defeat of the evil designs of enemies; yet it is as necessary to be observed in the administration of the government of the Church; if it is expected or desired that love, harmony, and peace, should prevail between the pastor and his flock; and among the several members of which it is composed. Without this quality—indeed, without the exercise of caution, moderation, discretion, and patience,—the results of true wisdom,—ministers, of whatever order, will make but little progress in the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom, if they are not indeed instrumental to its decline. An imprudent, though otherwise well meaning clergyman, may sometimes do as much harm in a Church, as a man, the reality of whose religion is doubted, and whose moral conduct is not such, as to entitle him to the esteem and respect of his flock. The cultivation of a property, therefore, so necessary to a judicious administration of the spiritual concerns of the Church, must also have been in the apostle's view, when he called upon the elders of the one at Ephesus, to *take heed to themselves.*

These are the principal duties, implied in that important injunction.

The apostle, however, did not stop here. Something further was necessary, in reminding these presbyters of the duties of their office, than the religious care of their own hearts and lives; and the due cultivation of those properties, which would render them capable of discharging such duties to effect. The faithful execution of the office itself, was a principal object of his concern; and therefore he charges them to *take heed* also *to all the flock* over which they had been appointed overseers, for the purpose of feeding it; in other words, *feeding the Church of* God.

Two great duties are here inculcated, that of superintendency, as overseers of the flock, and that, which was especially the object of their appointment, feeding it.

What the duties of the superintendency, here mentioned, are, may be learned from the metaphorical language used by the apostle; and from other passages of Scripture, of the same, or a similar

* Mat. x. 7.

import. As the shepherd, in the common and literal acceptation of the term, is not only to direct the sheep, committed to his care, as to the paths they may pursue; but is also to exercise the utmost caution and vigilance, to preserve them from harm, especially from the insidious design and open attacks of their natural enemies, the wolf and other beasts of prey; so it is the duty of the pastors of CHRIST's flock, the Church, to direct and guide the members of it into the *way of salvation, the path of life;* and to caution them against, and guard them from, not only those heretical and schismatical teachers, who artfully endeavor to delude them, and draw them from the truth of the Gospel; but also, those still more dangerous foes, the world, their naturally corrupt passions, and the spiritual powers of darkness. In a word, to *watch for their souls as they that must give account.**

That the duty last mentioned, was included in the injunction, *Take heed to all the flock*, is evident from the remarks which immediately follow the text. *For I know this*, said St Paul, *that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch.*

To carry into effect this superintendency, power is requisite. Indeed it is necessarily implied in the term. There could be little or no use, in inspecting the concerns of any part of the Church, under less authority existed in the officer to correct the disorders, which might prevail in it, and put into execution any legal measures tending to its purity and prosperity. That such authority does exist, in the ministerial office, will not be questioned, when reference is made to the declaration of our LORD to his disciples; *whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven;*† and to the question, *who is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his* household?‡ again when he says to the twelve, *I appoint unto you a kingdom, &c.*§ But, though this authority undoubtedly exists, mi-

* Heb. xiii. 17. † Matt. xviii. 18. ‡ Luke xii. 42. § Luke xxii. 29.

nisters are bound, as well to observe great prudence and moderation, as decision, and firmness, in the exercise of it: for *the* LORD *hath given it to us*, saith St. Paul, *for edification, and not destruction.**

To the same purpose, St. Peter exhorts the elders of the Churches, in some of the cities of Asia Minor, *To feed the flock of* GOD, *taking the oversight thereof, not, as being lords over* GOD'S *heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*†

The other great duty, included in the injunction, *Take heed to all the flock*, is *feeding it.*

The metaphorical expression, *feed the flock*, occurs in other places in Scripture; as the injunction of our blessed Lord to St. Peter, *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep;* and of St. Peter himself, as was repeated in the preceding article, *Feed the flock of* GOD.‡ The meaning of the metaphor *feed*, in these cases, is sufficiently obvious from its application; but it is put beyond doubt, in the prophet Jeremiah, where it is used in connection with words which illustrate it. *I will give you pastors according to mine own heart, saith the* LORD, *who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*‖ *To feed*, therefore, as it stands in the text, may be understood to comprehend every thing, in the ministerial office, which comes under the terms, instructing, persuading, exhorting, reproving, and consoling, both in public and private; every authorized act indeed, which will increase the flock, by drawing into it those who are immersed in sin, infected with unbelief, or error; and which will tend to nurture, and bring the whole, to maturity, and to the enjoyment of everlasting life.

It was the duty then of the elders, and urged upon them, by the apostle, to instruct the flock of CHRIST in the important doctrines and precepts of the Gospel; to open to their understanding the great mysteries of redemption, and the nature and obligation of the ordinances peculiar to that divine institution; to unfold the various duties of life, in all their extent and purity, and by arguments, drawn from their excellency, and from the example of the illustrious Author of redemption, inculcate and enforce the practice of them; and, as a motive to their perseverance in the faith, and

* 2 Cor. x. 8. † 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. ‡ Ibid. ‖ Jeremiah. iii. 15.

in a godly course, to bring frequently to their view the important truth, that *life and immortality are brought to light.** As precepts, that enforce and illustrate this duty, I refer you to what was said, under the Old Testament dispensation. *They* (the Levites) *shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy law.*† *The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and* the people *should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the* LORD *of Hosts.*‡ It was observed also, by our blessed Lord himself; in reference to the ministry in general; that *Every scribe, who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man, that is a householder, who bringeth forth, out of his treasure, things new and old.*§ The great object of CHRIST, said St. Paul, in giving *some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,* was, *for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of* CHRIST.‖ But more is required of the preachers of the Gospel, than simply to instruct. It is their duty also to persuade,—earnestly entreat, indeed, those who are not members of the Church, to repent, accept of GOD's offers in CHRIST, and unite themselves with his chosen flock; to exhort those, on the other hand, *to live righteously, soberly, and godly,*¶ who, although nominally members of that body, do not *put off the old man,*** or live up to the spirit of their profession; and if, notwithstanding, they continue in their ungodly and immoral courses, freely to reprove them; not, however, injudiciously, or unseasonably, but tenderly and discreetly; "to use," indeed, both public and "private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as the whole, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given."††

Such was the practice and the precepts of the apostle, as recorded in other places. *We are ambassadors for* CHRIST, said he to the Corinthians, *as though* GOD *did beseech you by us: we pray you in* CHRIST'S *stead, be ye reconciled to* GOD.‡‡ On another occasion, *We beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of* GOD

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* 2 Tim. i. 10. † Deut. xxxiii. 10. ‡ Mat. ii. 7. § Mat. xiii. 52. ‖ Ephe. iv. 2.
¶ Tit. ii. 12. ** Ephe. iv. 22. †† Ordination service. ‡‡ 2. Cor. v. 20.

*in vain.** In his directions to Titus, after naming several subjects, on which instruction or exhortation should be given, he adds, *these things speak, and exhort, and rebuke, with all authority.*†

Administering consolation, is another duty implied, in feeding the Church of GOD.

Such is the difference, in the human character, and such the diversity of condition in life, that while some, from the native hardness and obstinacy of their tempers, or from the almost uninterrupted prosperity and health which they enjoy, give frequent occasions for admonition or reproof; others are so timid and so diffident of themselves, or are so depressed with heavy and successive afflictions, that, instead of chiding, they require encouragement or consolation. The administration of the latter, therefore, is as necessary, as of the former; and calls for a reasonable proportion of every clergyman's attention. To perform this duty, with effect, however, much depends on the administrator's cultivation of that brotherly kindness for the members of his flock; that real sympathy in their doubts and afflictions, which are the result of genuine religion. St. Paul has left on record, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, a specimen of his own conduct in this respect. *Ye know*, said he, *how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you as a father doth his children.*‡

A faithful and devout attention to the public exercises of religion; as the due celebration of divine service, and the proper administration of the holy sacrament, together with those duties of a less public nature, as visiting the sick, &c., may also be considered as comprehended in the phrase *feeding the flock.*

It becomes now a proper subject of inquiry, in what manner, the duties comprised in that phrase, should be performed. From the Scriptures we learn, that zeal, diligence, and fidelity, are qualities required in the execution of the ministerial office.

In a work of such importance, as drawing men from the dominion and servitude of sin and Satan, *into the glorious liberty of the children of* GOD;§ and training them up, under the aids of

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* 2 Cor. vi. 10. † Tit. ii. 15. ‡ 1 Thes. ii. 11. § Rom. viii. 21.

his Holy Spirit, for the fruition of his blessed presence, in the celestial world; it is reasonable to suppose, considering the greatness, the sacredness, and the responsibility of the office, with which ministers are honored, that they cannot but be zealous and diligent in the good work. Such was not only the fact, with St. Paul himself; but that it might be so, also, with his fellow laborers and successors, in the glorious cause, he earnestly and tenderly urges them to these duties; and offers himself as an example for their imitation. *Preach the word*, said he to Timothy; *be instant, in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering, and doctrine.** *Watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*† *Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia*, said the apostle, in the charge, from which the text is taken, *after what manner, I have been with you at all seasons; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; but have shewed you, and have taught you, publicly, and from house to house.*‡

But, however zealous and diligent a minister may be, in the discharge of the duties of his office, there is one property, without which, his preaching will be of little use, and of still less estimation, in the view of pious Christians. I mean *fidelity* in dispensing divine truths. And unless he adhere to the simplicity of the Gospel, in his public instruction; unless in the composition of his discourses, he aim at the edification, the *awakening*, and the comforting of his flock, rather than at the display of his talents and learning, preaching CHRIST JESUS the LORD, and not himself;§ —unless, like St. Paul, *he shun not to declare all the counsel of* GOD,‖ however displeasing certain doctrines and precepts of the Gospel may be to some of his hearers; and unless it be his aim, and his delight *to please* GOD,¶ rather than men; he can neither be entitled to the character of a clergyman of fidelity in his profession; nor, according to St. Paul, *be accounted a minister of* CHRIST, *and steward of the mysteries of* GOD; *because it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*** For the

* 2 Tim. iv. 2. † 2 Tim. iv. 5. ‡ Acts xx. 18, 20. § 2 Cor. iv. 5
‖ Acts xx. 27. ¶ 1 Thes. ii. 4. ** 1 Cor. iv. 1.

same reason, he cannot come under the description of *that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat, in due season*:* nor can he say, with our apostle, *I have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of* GOD *deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending myself to every man's conscience, in the sight of* GOD.†

In making these observations on the necessity of fidelity in preaching the Gospel; I would not have it supposed, that I contend for, or even countenance, that mistaken fidelity, that extreme, on the subject, of laying great stress upon certain opinions, not important in themselves, nor necessary to salvation; which men of metaphysical minds have derived from detached and obscure passages of Scripture; and which their followers make a great merit of boldly declaring to be important parts of *the counsel of* GOD. Nor do I countenance unnecessary harshness, in declaring any truth of the Gospel; or perpetually harping on some doctrine, important indeed, but not exclusively so; and which cannot fail, in the end, to become wearisome to the hearers.

Neither of these, nor any thing similar, comes within the correct idea of fidelity.

Having thus attempted to show, what was implied in the injunctions, in St. Paul's charge, *Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock;* I am now to call to your attention, the high obligations to such care, arising both from the divine nature of the Being, by whom these persons had been constituted overseers of the flock; and the immense value of the price, which had been given for it, the blood of the Son of GOD.

Whether the elders, as some have suggested, were the twelve persons, mentioned in the preceding chapter, as having, in consequence of the imposition of the apostle's hands, received the HOLY GHOST; and were thus qualified to speak with tongues and prophesy: and whether from this circumstance especially, they were said by him, to have been made overseers by that Divine Person,

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* Luke xii. 42. † 2 Cor. iv. 2.

cannot now be determined: nor is it a matter of consequence; as no doubt can be entertained, by those who examine the Scriptures, that the same HOLY BEING is the source of the office and authority of the Christian ministry; whether the conveyance of it, by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, or bishops, was accompanied, as in those early ages of the Church, with miraculous gifts; or, in succeeding ages, when the necessity for them no longer existed, without such advantages.

That St. Paul intended, by reminding the elders of the sacred and exalted source from which they derived their ministry, to impress more forcibly upon their minds the injunction, *Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock;* is, I think, sufficiently evident from the tenor of the charge. If, therefore, from the great and merciful object of the institution of that ministry,—had it originated only in man,—much obligation to execute it faithfully, would naturally rest upon the mind of the occupant; how far greater would be the sense of it, whenever it should occur to his thoughts, that the Almighty searcher of the hearts, and trier of the reins of men, that immaculate Being "to whom all hearts are open, and all desires known," had honored him, with that dignified, though responsible office; and expected from him a performance of the duties of it, corresponding with the high favor conferred; and the important object for which it was instituted. This sense of obligation would be much increased, from the reflection, that he is indebted to the same gracious and divine Being for the disposition and ability to perform properly the duties of the office, as for the office itself. It is indeed the peculiar province of the HOLY SPIRIT, to prepare the mind and heart of the preacher, to give seasonable and wholesome instruction and counsel; as well as of the hearer, to receive them. Feeling, therefore, as he ought, the immense weight of these obligations, can he be otherwise than powerfully excited to the performance of his duties?

But there is an obligation to discharge them faithfully, of a still higher and more affecting nature; viz., that *the Church of* GOD, which the elders were appointed by the HOLY GHOST to feed, was *purchased with his blood.* As the correctness of the reading, in the passage, *the Church of* GOD, *which he hath purchased*

with his own blood, has been called in question, by those, who deny the divinity of our Savior; it will be expected, perhaps,—especially, as the force of what I shall observe on the topic before us, rests principally on the truth of that property in CHRIST—that something will be said in support of that reading. As it stands in our Bible, it is a most decisive testimony of the Deity of that illustrious person: for he that shed his blood for the Church, is there expressly called GOD.

It cannot be disputed, however, that in several ancient manuscript copies of the New Testament; as well as in some other versions, a different reading exists. Instead of *the Church of* GOD, some have *the Church of the* Lord, others, *the Church of the* Lord, *and of* GOD, *or of our* LORD GOD. The first of these, viz. *the Church of the* Lord, as it presents the least difficulty to the Unitarians, who deny that the term Lord, when applied to CHRIST, is any evidence of his divinity—they contend, is the true reading. There is, however, one considerable objection to it.

The phrase, *Church of the* Lord is never used in the New Testament. On the other hand, *the Church of* GOD, frequently occurs. The late Gilbert Wakefield, a learned Unitarian, acknowledges, therefore, that the phrase, *Church of* GOD, is the true reading; but instead of translating the *Greek* phrase, which is literally translated in our version, *with his own blood*, he renders it, *by his own Son;* "and brings some passages from the Greek and Roman writers to shew that the words, in those languages, which literally signify blood, are used also to signify Son, or near relative: and were this the only place, where purchasing with his own blood occurred, we might receive this saying; but as the redemption of a man is, throughout the New Testament, attributed to the sacrificial death of CHRIST, it is not likely, that this very unusual meaning should apply here."*

Considering, therefore, the reading, as it stands in our version, most likely to be correct; and, as it regards the sense, substantially the same, with the other readings already mentioned; and consequently, believing that the Church, which the elders of Ephesus, and all other duly qualified ministers were appointed to feed, was

* See Whitby, Clarke, Scott, &c., in loc.

purchased, at so immense a price as the blood of Him, who is God as well as man; in whom, indeed, dwelleth *all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;** what must be its value; and therefore what the obligation *to take heed*, resting upon those under whose care and nurture, it was thus placed? It requires but little reflection, —a slight glance, indeed, at the subject, to perceive the force of this interrogation; and therefore the weight, the importance, and the affecting nature of the charge, which was given by St. Paul, in such strong terms, to the elders; and enforced with such powerful, such almost overwhelming considerations. That creatures so inferior,—so comparatively low in the scale of intelligence, creatures so fallen, so depraved, as those elders, in common with other men were, should be honored, by a special, a Divine commission, with the office of superintending and spiritually feeding that Body, for whose salvation, and whose final exaltation to an eternal and blissful immortality, the beloved Son of God, *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person*,† mercifully condescended, in his incarnate state to suffer,—to shed, indeed, his most precious blood; must have been a reflection, that could not but astonish, and, at the same time, humble and alarm them, under the immense weight of the obligation which it implied.

In the discussion of the charge before us, I have not considered it necessary to advert to the circumstance; that though my observations were chiefly confined, in their application, to the elders addressed by the apostle; yet I took it for granted, that I should be understood; for this ought to be the understanding, in all such cases,—as intending, that their application should be extended to Christian ministers, in general.

Under this view of the subject, then, well may we exclaim, Right Reverend and Reverend Brethren, in the words of the apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?*‡ Which of us, frail and imperfect as we are, sufficiently *takes heed to himself;* to the daily increase of the piety and purity of his own heart and life; to a faithful improvement in that knowledge, and those other qualities, so necessary for the proper and efficient discharge of his moment-

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* Col. ii. 9. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

ous duties? Which of us, in the degree required, *takes heed* to the flock, which he is appointed to superintend, and to feed; or, at all times, sufficiently considers what that superintendence, and nurture imply; also, whether he performs those duties, in the extensive, faithful, and zealous manner, which is expected of him; and which his own heart assures him he ought? Which of us constantly lives, under the deep impression and influence, that his office is derived from the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD; that he is the minister of JESUS CHRIST; and that the flock, which he is appointed to feed, is a part of that immense Body, the Church, for the purchase of which, the Son of GOD both suffered and died; and, therefore, feels as he ought, the awful responsibility, attached to his office?

Such deficiencies, we are constrained to acknowledge, exist: a part, indeed, the effect of the infirmities and weakness of our nature; but a part, also, from our too great attachment to the world, and our neglect of watchfulness and prayer. Let us earnestly entreat our Heavenly Father that both may be forgiven; but that the latter, through the influences of his HOLY SPIRIT, may be corrected, so that we may not ultimately fall into condemnation; and *after we have preached to others, be ourselves cast-aways.**

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* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

The present number of the *Pulpit*, containing the Discourse of Bishop CROES, having been *printed*, though not published, previous to his decease, it would have been sent out much earlier to subscribers, but in order that the Discourse of the venerated, and much respected Prelate, might be attended by this *obituary notice*, for the preparation and procurement of which, *some days* have necessarily been expended. They are now, together, submitted for the respectful consideration of the patrons and subscribers to the work. The September number will soon be out.

OBITUARY NOTICE OF BISHOP CROES.

Died, at his residence in New Brunswick, N. J., on the 30th day of July, the Right Reverend JOHN CROES, D. D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the Diocese of New Jersey.

Bishop CROES was born in Elizabethtown, N. J., on the 1st day of June, 1762, of parents who had emigrated from Germany. At the age of eleven, he removed with his parents to the town of Newark. His father originally designed to instruct him in some mechanical employment, as a means of future support, since the circumstances of the family were not such as to warrant incurring the expense of a liberal education. But very early in life the subject of this notice manifested a great fondness for books, and embraced every opportunity which offered to improve himself by reading. His father observing this, at length gave him the option of learning a trade or procuring an education *by means of his own exertions*. He chose the latter alternative. His endeavors in this respect, were, however, for a considerable time, retarded by the war of the revolution. In three or four years after the war commenced, he was called upon to take up arms in the cause of his country, and he continued engaged in this cause, with occasional intervals of rest, till the peace in 1782. He then resumed in earnest, and with that diligence and energy that marked his course through life, the acquisition of a liberal education. In doing this he was materially assisted by the late Rev. Dr. MACWHORTER, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Newark—a friend for whom he always entertained the highest regard, and who continued to manifest his kind offices towards him ever after. By indefatigable perseverance, Mr. CROES soon acquired a good knowledge of the

Latin and Greek languages, at the same time laying the foundation of an unusually accurate knowledge of the English language. Having made these acquisitions, he undertook the business of instruction, thereby riveting more deeply the knowledge he had obtained, and procuring the means of supporting himself while studying divinity. In 1785, he married Martha Crane, daughter of a respectable citizen of Newark. Their offspring consisted of five sons and three daughters, of whom four are at this time living, viz. two sons, (both ministers in the Episcopal Church,) and two daughters. Mr. CROES continued in the business of instruction and of preparation for the ministry till the year 1789. He then visited the town of Swedesborough, in Gloucester county, and accepted an invitation to act as a lay-reader in Trinity church in that place, for a few months. In February, 1790, he was ordained Deacon, by Bishop WHITE, and assumed the full charge of the congregation. In March, 1792, he was admitted by the same Right Reverend gentleman to the holy order of Priests.

Swedesborough is a Swedish settlement, and the congregation originally was attached to the Swedish Church. When Mr. CROES assumed the charge of it, all its concerns, both temporal and spiritual, were in an unprosperous state. The church edifice was not finished, and the worshippers were few. He applied himself immediately to the finishing of the church, and soon rendered it one of the neatest and most convenient in the diocese. All the other temporal affairs of the congregation quickly assumed a more promising aspect, while the hearers and communicants steadily increased in number. In this place he resided twelve years. In the year 1801, he received an invitation from Christ Church, New Brunswick, and St. Peter's Church, Spotswood, to become their pastor, and at the same time was elected principal of the academy in New Brunswick, which had been without a teacher for some time. This academy was the remains of what had been Queen's College —the exercises in which had been for several years discontinued. Here, also, both as minister and teacher, he exhibited the same ardent desire to be useful, and to improve the concerns committed to his charge. The academy, which he commenced with fifteen scholars, soon numbered fifty, and sixty, and seventy, and attained a character not excelled by any other in the state. The affairs of his churches also prospered under his judicious management. In 1808, he resigned the charge of the academy, (having previously resigned that of the church at Spotswood,) and devoted himself solely to the church in New Brunswick. In 1815, he was elected by the Convention of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, Bishop of that Diocese. But for weighty reasons, he thought proper to decline that honorable post, although the emoluments

of it would have been more than double his salary, at any time, in New Jersey. In the same year he was chosen Bishop of the Episcopal Church in his own Diocese, and was consecrated to that holy office, in November, by Bishop WHITE,—Bishops HOBART and KEMP being present and assisting. In this responsible office also, the same traits of industry and zeal were, by him, manifested. Almost every year he visited all the churches in the Diocese, and by his judicious management of the missionary fund, he assisted in resuscitating several old and decayed congregations, and in establishing several new ones.

Of Bishop CROES, it may with truth be said, that the Church in New Jersey is to him indebted for a "long continuance of his nursing care and protection." For forty years he took a prominent share in her concerns, and for the greater part of that time, the *most prominent*. Nearly all the general institutions of the Church originated directly or indirectly in him, and ever received from him the warmest patronage and support—while such was the confidence reposed in him by both the clergy and laity, that for a long time they seemed cheerfully to accede to him the control and management of most of these institutions. To the Church his heart and affections were devoted—every instance of her prosperity caused him to rejoice, and never was he happier than when laboring for her.

From what has been said, it will be observed that Bishop CROES was a self-made man—"*faber suæ fortunæ*." Humanly speaking, to himself alone was he indebted for his attainments and his reputation; and the source of these may be traced to the qualities that particularly marked his character—industry, perseverance, a temper never desponding, and a mind unusually sagacious and accurate in its views. As a writer, Bishop CROES was uncommonly correct, his style is distinguished by neatness—his choice of words by the most scrupulous attention to their true signification. As a speaker, notwithstanding a complaint in his head which generally injures distinctness of articulation, it would be difficult to find any one more easily heard and understood. In reading the service of the Church, he was peculiarly happy. As a member of society, he was distinguished for the strict uprightness of his conduct, the urbanity and dignity of his manners, his kindness to the poor and afflicted, and the interest he took in all benevolent institutions. Bishop CROES was, from the natural disposition of his mind, a lover of order; he therefore never could tolerate deviations from the rubrics and canons of the Church; while, perhaps, no person could be found better acquainted than he was, with her laws and regulations. Finally, his discourses were all marked by clear and forcible exhibitions of the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. He "rests from his labors," but his works will long be remembered.

FUNERAL OF THE LATE BISHOP CROES.

The funeral of the Right Rev. John Croes, D. D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New Jersey, was attended on Tuesday, July 31, at 2 o'clock, P. M., at his late residence, in New Brunswick. The assemblage of the members of the flock of which the deceased had been, for about thirty years, the much respected pastor, of the people of other denominations in that city, and of those who came from other places to testify their regard for the deceased prelate, was large. Precisely at the hour of three, a long procession moved, with slow and solemn steps, to the venerable edifice in which the deceased servant of Christ had long officiated. The pall was borne by two of the clergy of the deceased Bishop, and by several ministers of the different denominations attached to Rutgers College, and to the several churches in the city, all assembled in Christian fellowship for the solemn and affecting purpose of conveying to the house of silence, the mortal remains of the first bishop that had finished his course in the Diocese of New Jersey. The anthem and the lesson in the funeral service, were read by the Rev. John M. Ward, Rector of St. Peter's Church in Spotswood; and the service at the grave, which was opened near the chancel, was pronounced by the Rev. T. Chapman, Rector of St. Peter's Church in Perth Amboy. A deep solemnity pervaded the whole assembly, and the words of the funeral service, in which it is expressed that "it hath pleased Almighty God, in his wise providence to take out of the world the soul of our deceased" *Right Reverend Father in* God, went home to the feelings of all, but more especially of those who admired in the deceased Bishop a firm attachment to the doctrines and practices of the Church, adorned with a consistent and exemplary conduct in all the relations of life.

It would have been gratifying to the feelings of the mourning relatives, and of the other friends of the deceased, if one of the brethren of the deceased in the Episcopal station, according to custom, could have been present to add a funeral discourse to the other solemnities of the occasion. But time could not be taken to procure the attendance of one of the bishops; Bishop Onderdonk, of New York, being absent in a distant part of his Diocese, and the Bishops of Pennsylvania being too far removed to admit of the attendance of either of them on the occasion.

Immediately after the conclusion of the funeral solemnities, the clergy of the Diocese present met, and passed several resolutions expressive of their respect for the memory of their much valued and respected Diocesan, and of their sympathy with his family under their severe bereavement.

PROCEEDINGS IN THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY.

Proceedings of the Protestant Episcopal Clergy in the Diocese of New Jersey.

At a meeting of a number of the clergy of the Diocese of New Jersey, held at New Brunswick, on the 31st day of July, 1832, the Rev. JAMES CHAPMAN being called to the Chair, and the Rev. JOHN M. WARD appointed Secretary, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted:—

Whereas, it hath pleased ALMIGHTY GOD, in his wise providence, to call from the scene of his earthly labors, our Rt. Rev. Father in GOD, JOHN CROES, D. D., Bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey, therefore be it unanimously resolved,

1st. That while we feel it our duty to bow with humble submission to this afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence, we cannot refrain from expressing our deep regret, at the loss which this Diocese, and the clergy in particular, have sustained by the removal of our venerated Diocesan, whose many virtues as a Christian endeared him to the hearts of all who knew him, and whose sound, consistent, and undeviating principles, so eminently qualified him for the office of a Bishop; and by whose nursing care the Church in this Diocese is, under GOD, indebted for its great increase and prosperity. His indefatigable zeal, fidelity, and promptitude, in laboring to discharge, though in feeble health, the duties of his apostolic and ministerial character, and to promote the best interests of our holy religion, and of the Church, placed him high in the affections, and secured the esteem of his clergy, in whom they ever found an affectionate friend, a wise counsellor, and a most faithful overseer and guide.

2d. That we offer our sincere condolence to the widow, and other members of the family of our deceased Bishop, and heartily pray that they may enjoy the consolation and support of the Gospel in their sore bereavement, and that GOD will sanctify to them, and to his Church, this afflictive dispensation of his providence.

3d. That as a further testimonial of respect and veneration for the memory of our revered Diocesan, we will wear the customary badge of mourning for thirty days, and we respectfully recommend to our brethren throughout the Diocese to do the same, as an expression of mourning for our bereavement.

4th. That a copy of the above resolutions, signed by the Secretary, be sent to the family of the deceased, and to the Editors of the Times, the Fredonian, and the Churchman, for publication.

JOHN M. WARD, *Secretary.*

Proceedings of the Vestry of St. Peter's Church, Spotswood, in relation to the death of Bishop CROES.

At a meeting of the Vestry of St. Peter's Church, Spotswood, held, on Tuesday, July 31st, 1832, at 9 o'clock, A. M., the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:—

1st. That this Vestry have heard, with feelings of deep and unfeigned sorrow, of the decease of their venerable and much esteemed Diocesan and former Rector, the Rt. Rev. Bishop CROES.

2d. That this Vestry cherish with grateful remembrance, not only his valuable services amongst them during the time of his connexion with them as their Rector, but also, since his election to the Episcopate, his pious, consistent, and persevering endeavors, to promote the best interests of the Church, and of the Diocese at large, over which he has so long, so faithfully, and so efficiently presided.

3d. That as a further testimonial of respect for the private and public character of our Bishop, we will cause the church to be hung with the customary badge of mourning until the festival of Advent Sunday.

4th. That while we feel it our duty to bow with submission to the dispensations of an all wise Providence, we offer our sincere condolence to the widow and other members of the family in their sore bereavement, and heartily pray that He who has declared himself to be the "Father of the fatherless and the GOD of the widow," will sustain them with the spiritual consolations of that holy religion which supported their beloved head through the long and painful illness with which he was afflicted.

5th. That a copy of the above resolutions be forwarded by the Secretary to the family of the deceased Bishop, and also to the Editors of the Fredonian, and the Churchman, for publication.

JAMES D. TARRINGTON, *Secretary.*

PROCEEDINGS IN THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK.

During Bishop ONDERDONK's visit to Ithaca, on Wednesday, the 8th instant, several of the clergy of the Diocese being there present, passed, in conjunction with the Bishop, the following resolutions, occasioned by the death of the late Bishop of New Jersey.

The subscribers, the Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of New York, and clergymen of the said Church, being assembled in the village of Ithaca, in the said State, on occasion of the official visit of the Bishop to the Church in that village, and having received information of the decease of the Right Rev. JOHN CROES, D. D., Bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey, do hereby unanimously resolve:

1. That we tender our sincere condolence to our brethren of the Diocese of New Jersey, on the severe bereavement to which they have been called, in the death of their venerable and excellent Diocesan; and to the venerated relict and family of the deceased, on their peculiarly heavy affliction.

2. That we cherish a lively remembrance of the sound principles, the primitive piety, the official fidelity, and the many estimable traits of character which commended the late Bishop of New Jersey to the confidence of all true friends of the Church, the respect of all who knew him, and the love of all who enjoyed the privilege of his familiar intercourse.

3. That we gratefully recollect his claims on the peculiar regard of the Churchmen of this Diocese, growing out of the essential services which he rendered to it during the absence from the country of its late Diocesan.

4. That in testimony of our respect for his memory, we will wear crape on the left arm for the space of thirty days.

5. That a copy of these resolutions, signed by all present, be sent to the family of the late Bishop, and another to the Secretary of the Convention of New Jersey.

BENJAMIN T. ONDERDONK.
LUCIUS CARTER.
HENRY GREGORY.
JAMES D. CARDER.
GEORGE FISKE.

Ithaca, N. Y., August 8th, 1832.

At a meeting of *Clergymen of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the city of New York*, held at the house of the Rev. THOMAS LYELL, D. D., on Thursday, August 16, 1832,—

The Rev. Dr. LYELL was called to the Chair, and the Rev. Mr. SCHROEDER was appointed Secretary.

The Chairman having stated the object of the meeting, the fol-

lowing preamble and resolutions, offered by the Rev. Dr. BERRIAN, were unanimously adopted.

Intelligence having been recently communicated of the death of the Right Rev. JOHN CROES, D. D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of New Jersey,—and desirous to testify our grief at this afflictive dispensation of Providence, and our unfeigned respect for his memory,

Resolved, That this meeting, entertaining a high sense of the unaffected piety, exemplary conduct, sound principles, and faithful services of the late Bishop CROES, sincerely sympathize with the clergy and laity of the Diocese of New Jersey, in the loss which they have sustained.

Resolved, That in recollection of his social and domestic virtues, which endeared him so much to all with whom he was connected, they deeply condole also with his family and friends.

Resolved, That copies of the foregoing preamble and resolutions be communicated to the vestries of the several Episcopal parishes in New Jersey, and to the family of Bishop CROES.

THOMAS LYELL, *Chairman.*

J. F. SCHROEDER, *Secretary.*

NOTE.—To *prove* the high sentiments of veneration and those warm feelings of regard that are entertained for the memory of the lamented Bishop, by our American Church, it is here *noticed* that proceedings and resolutions, of a similar character with the above, have been made and held in *several* States of the Union. "The righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance."—ED.